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management council newsletter

. . . . events of interest to USDA managers

Issue 112 * January 1981

NEW SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

President-elect Reagan has nominated John Block for Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Block, who is the Secretary of Agriculture for the state of Illinois, has a strong background in export promotion. He is expected to be confirmed by the Senate before the Inauguration.

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1980

This act has been popularly referred to as the "Brooks Bill" or "H.R. 6410." It was signed December 12, 1980 and becomes effective on April 1, 1981. The act will have significant consequences for USDA. We will be required to have a central focus for information resources management in the Department. The focus must lie with a senior official who will review all agency information management. There are various functions in USDA which must be coordinated including: ADP, public-use reporting, information management (records management), Federal statistical activities, paper-work reduction, etc. The Act establishes an office in OMB to oversee these programs. USDA managers need to consider where this function should be placed and how it can operate most effectively. (Contact, Philip Hutchens, FNS, x78278)

REVISION OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE ACT

The first complete revision of the Foreign Service Act since 1946 was signed into law in December. Effective February 15, 1981, the Foreign Agricultural Service will be covered by the Act. Most of the authority this law gives to the Secretary of State is vested in the Secretary of Agriculture for FAS employees. The addition of FAS and the Foreign Commercial Service of Commerce to the other foreign affairs agencies covered by law will help improve the

administration of the U.S. Government's operations abroad. The Foreign Service Act authorizes the President to designate additional USDA positions that could be covered in the future.

OSHA INSPECTIONS OF USDA FACILITIES

In response to Executive Order 12196 and 29 CFR Part 1960, USDA has reported to the U.S. Department of Labor that we do not intend to establish certified safety and health committees at this time. As a result, all USDA facilities and worksites are subject to unannounced inspections by representatives of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). All responsible agency personnel should be notified of the possibility of these visits. Within twenty-four hours of any OSHA inspections, agency personnel should notify the Office of Safety and Health Management of the location of the visit and the name and telephone number of an onsite contact person.

USDA's decision to have no "certified" committees does not prohibit any agency from establishing any other type of safety and health committee. (Contact, Dr. Gerald W. Oakley, OSHM x78247)

PROMOTING EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The Office of Safety and Health Management has designed posters advertising services offered under the Employee Assistance Program. A limited number of posters have been made available to each agency's Employee Assistance Coordinator. The posters are being displayed throughout the Washington complex to inform employees where they can receive help. (Contact, Deborah Giannoni, OSHM, x73329)

IPA AGREEMENT FOR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

OSHM has recently completed an IPA agreement with the Northwestern Community Mental Health Center for the services of a clinical psychologist, Richard Setton. He will assist in developing the nationwide Employee Assistance Program for USDA employees. Mr. Setton has served as Clinical Coordinator at the Northwestern Center, which included work in individual, group, child, family, and marital therapy. Earlier he was employed by USDA as a management analyst and conducted department-wide studies on organizational effectiveness. (Contact, Phillip R. Mueller, OSHM, 472-2320)

NATIONAL ENERGY USE

United States use of petroleum in 1980 was well below 1979 levels. National energy consumption in August, the most recent month for which statistics are available, was 6.9 percent below August 1979, and full year consumption is running at about the same reduced level. Energy use in the transportation sector, accounting for about 25 percent of national energy use, was down 10.6 percent from the previous August. This is pretty much in line with the 9.2 percent reduction in mileage recorded by USDA in all of FY 1980.

FY 1981 FURNITURE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPENSE PLANS

With the exception of one agency, OMB approved USDA's FY 1981 Furniture Requirement and Expense Plans on December 8. The approved plans set expenditure limits for FY 1981. Agencies with approved plans are authorized to process furniture orders in accordance with those plans and the revised guidelines in Notice O&F-AS-13.

CENTRAL COPYING SYSTEM

The Reproduction and Distribution Division, O&F, is now reconfiguring and upgrading the central copier system for the DC complex. The Division operates 70 copiers ranging in size from the high-speed manned duplicators capable of producing 500,000 copies per month down to portable tabletop models provided to fill short-term needs for copier services in individual offices. The changes being made are aimed at both keeping pace with rising copy volumes and coping with the rapidly rising costs of providing the required services.

New copiers will be added to the system, primarily in rooms 5060-South and 3960-South. Several older machines in scattered locations will be replaced with new machines having auto-feed capabilities. Manned duplicating services will be centralized in rooms 0041-South, 6-A Administration, and 198-GHI Building to increase large machine utilization. In the South Building, medium and large size jobs may, as before, be dropped off in rooms 3906-South and 5060-South, but will be transported to 0041-South for processing and then returned to the drop-off room.

ASCS MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENTS

Postage Metering. ASCS has installed postage metering equipment in 56 major field offices. These offices account for about 15 percent (\$1,725,000) of the annual ASCS postage bill of \$11.5 million. Metering has increased the awareness of actual postage costs and is encouraging better mail management. The cost of the mail meters and electronic scales was \$315,000 and ASCS anticipates savings of \$310,000 per year.

Metering of UPS Shipments. Metering of United Parcel Service shipments by larger volume offices has reduced the time for preparing packages for shipment while providing more accurate weight and cost figures.

High-Speed Facsimile System. ASCS has installed high-speed facsimile machines in 53 field offices enabling direct communication among these offices and with the Washington Facsimile Center. This system, which replaced the GSA-ARS teletype system, has been a major factor in changing procedures for issuing directives and reports. The system has improved the use of directives considerably and resulted in more timely receipt of critical reports. (Contact, Wayne Wang, ASCS, x72717)

INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON PRODUCTIVITY MEASUREMENT

OPM has started a task force to strengthen agency use of productivity measurement systems in management and budget processes. A network of agencies willing to work together to advance productivity measurement is now being formed. The task force is contacting federal agencies that might want to participate in this effort. (Contact, Frank DiGialleonardo, O&F, x76010)

SES CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT

The SES Candidate Development Program for FY 1981 has a revised timetable. The closing date was November 14, 1980, and all nominations were due in the Office of Personnel by December 5, 1980. The Performance Evaluation Review Board evaluations are taking place January 4-16, 1981, the Customized Assessment Process will take place from January 21 to February 6, 1981, and the Public Announcement of SES Participants will be made in February 1981. (Contact, Tom Gill, OP, x73285)

USDA ACHIEVES FY 1980
PROCUREMENT PREFERENCE
GOALS

The following chart compares the Department's goals and achievements under the procurement preference program during FY 1980.

	Program	Goal	Achievement
1.	Minority Business (total)	\$60,000,000	\$65,123,000
	a. Competitive	20,000,000	14,700,000
	b. 8(a)	28,200,000	39,972,000
	c. Subcontracts	6,800,000	5,400,000
	d. Small Purchases	5,000,000	5,051,000
		<u>\$60,000,000</u>	<u>\$65,123,000</u>
2.	Women-owned	\$5,500,000	\$10,504,000
3.	Labor Surplus Area	\$77,500,000	\$44,720,000
4.	Small Business	*68%	*55.4%

*USDA recommended to SBA and OFPP that our goal should be to give 60% of our contracts to small businesses. SBA and OFPP rejected this goal. The higher goal of 68% was then established.

Goals were met or exceeded except those for small minority business competitive awards, subcontract awards by large prime contractors to small minority businesses, and the overall awards to small businesses.

Competitive awards to minority businesses are extremely difficult to control because a set-aside is not authorized and minority firms must compete openly with nonminority firms. This lessens the number of contracts minority businesses receive.

The shortfall in the percentage of contracts awarded to small businesses can be attributed to the fact that 74.2 percent of all purchases over \$10,000 were for food commodities. The high initial investment costs needed to do business on that scale preclude entry by most small business firms.

Responsible officials are urged to make regular progress checks on their agency accomplishments in meeting all procurement preference goals.
(Contact, Mel Moore, OSDBU, x77117)

NEW STANDARDS FOR RACE AND
ETHNIC STATISTICS

Effective December 28, 1980, statistics on USDA employees will be converted to the new race and ethnic standards outlined in Federal Personnel Manual Letter (FPM Letter) 298-10 dated September 20, 1980, "Implementation of U.S. Department of Commerce Statistical Policy Directive 15: Race and Ethnic Standards for Statistics in Administrative Reporting". In addition, USDA agencies must give all new employees the opportunity to complete a Standard Form 181 (Race and National Origin Identification) at the time they enter the workforce. (Contact, Jim Westbrooks, EEO Division, x74563)

MULTI-YEAR AFFIRMATIVE
ACTION PLANS

Each USDA agency with 300 or more employees will be required to write a multi-year affirmative action plan. These plans are to be written according to guidelines issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and USDA's Office of Equal Opportunity. Specific instructions will be given to each agency's EEO Coordinator. (Contact, Jim Westbrooks, EEO Division, x74563)

HISPANIC RECRUITMENT

The first of three major recruitment efforts to increase the number of Hispanic persons employed by USDA was held December 1-3, 1980 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Hispanic Employment Program and the Office of Personnel organized the team of recruitment representatives from the following agencies and staff offices:

APHIS	O&F
ASCS	SEA
ESS	SCS
FAS	OEO
FmHA	SEC
FS	OP
FSQS	

Recruitment was aimed at filling those positions projected to be vacant during the December-April period. A followup meeting is planned for a final count of contacts made and applications received. Each personnel office will be reporting monthly on actual placements made. (Contact, E. Elizondo, OEO, x72488 or 74806)